



Reef Users Support SPAs

The true value of coral reefs and their colorful inhabitants is impossible to measure, but the economic contribution of reefs to four counties in Southeast Florida has been addressed in a recent study entitled *Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Southeast Florida*. This study, conducted by scientists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with the support of the four counties involved, employed extensive survey research to calculate the economic value of natural and artificial reefs over a 12-month period for Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties. To collect the necessary data, the survey was given to recreational boaters who visited the reef from June 2000 to May 2001 to fish, scuba, or snorkel. The study was designed to determine the use of artificial and natural reefs during the one-year period; willingness of reef users to spend money to maintain natural and artificial reefs; willingness to pay for additional artificial reefs; and socioeconomic characteristics. The study also calculated the economic contribution made by both natural and artificial reefs based on the money that users spent for reef-related activities such as fishing, scuba, and snorkeling.



A snorkeler glides over a large boulder star coral in one of the Sanctuary Preservation Areas (SPAs) of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

For Monroe County resident reef users, the survey also included questions to assess user opinions about the Sanctuary's 24 fully protected ("no-take") zones, which were established to protect coral reefs in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in 1997. Seventy-eight percent of survey participants responded "yes" when asked whether or not they support the Sanctuary's "no-take" zones; and 57% said that they would support

additional "no take" zones along Monroe County's coastline. Respondents indicated that, on the average, they would be willing to extend the "no-take" management tool to include almost 32% of all natural reefs off Monroe County. These statistics indicate support for the fully protected zones as a management tool. Residents of Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade were also asked about the Sanctuary's "no-take" zones; 76%, 75%, and 74%, respectively, responded that they supported the current "no-take" zones in the Sanctuary. For more information about the results and methods used in the survey, please visit: <http://marineeconomics.noaa.gov/Reefs/>.



Historic shipwrecks serve as artificial reefs and cultural resources in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

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